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ABSTRACT

This document is a study of the dynamics of National History Day (NHD). The report notices a discrepancy between accounts of National History Day and those concerning contemporary history education. Contemporary history instruction was seen as boring and unimportant, while National History Day activities were seen as a fun opportunity for students to learn about historical subjects in depth. The goal of the study was to obtain a realistic portrait of NHD and determine: (1) whether the positive claims for NHD were realistic and founded; (2) why and how the program grew from a local program with 129 students in 1974 to over 500,000 students nationally in 1991; and (3) what implications there were for educational processes and concerns. It includes: a description of the study; findings in relation to the history and development of NHD and to the learning and motivational effects of participation in NHD; implications for educational reform in general and for the teaching and learning of history specifically; and conclusions, dilemmas, and recommendations. The study was an ethnohistorical case study using an approach that combined traditional historiographic methods such as library, documentary, and primary source research with traditional ethnographic procedures such as participant observation and interviewing. The historical foundations and the contemporary dynamics of NHD as well as the relationship between the two elements are described. The study concluded that participation in NHD provided an opportunity to fulfill needs that could not be met in a traditional classroom such as peer interaction and empowerment. Contains 39 references. (DK)

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NATIONAL HISTORY DAY: AN ETHNOHISTORICAL CASE STUDY

OR

TAKING THE LID OFF THE POT

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NATIONAL HISTORY DAY: AN ETHNOHISTORICAL CASE STUDY
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I. The Context

Contemporary Secondary Education

> I don't do a lot in school....I don't like any of the high school classes really. You just sit there and they tell you something and they give you a test and you tell it right back to them. Everybody has the same answer on the test if you do it right. (Sally, 1990)[1]

Since the early 1980s, there has been an avalanche of literature on the need for secondary school reform. Much of that rhetoric (Boyer, 1988; Cuban, 1991; Goodlad, 1984; Sizer, 1984) denounces the traditional teacher-dominated, text-book driven pedagogy as inappropriate, ineffective, boring, uninspired, inadequate, and backwards. Willoughby (in Parker, 1984, p. 2) claims the contemporary traditional educational system produces students who are slightly better at skills that were "of questionable value in the nineteenth Century and will be of little value in the twenty-first Century." According to analysts and futurists (Benjamin, 1989; Hartoonian, 1984; Naisbitt, 1982; Sarason, 1982; Toffler, 1970, 1974, 1980), the torrents and explosions of information and rapidly occurring societal changes require an active learning educational program in which students find, select, organize, and interpret information in order to develop their own knowledge and conclusions and to make decisions for themselves and their society.

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[1] Except for the names of the founding professors (Drs. Van Tassel and Ubbelodhe) and the Executive and Associate Directors (Drs. Scharf and Gorn), all names are pseudonyms.

Contemporary History Education

Nowhere is the reformers' nightmare manifested more clearly than in the typical history course in which such an active learning methodology is at odds with a teacher trying to "cover" a voluminous curriculum content. While there has been an emphasis on active learning methods - such as student investigation, observation, use of primary materials, and on-site research - in history ever since the 1880's (Cuban, 1991; Hertzberg, 1988; Jenness, 1990), the predominant activities in history classrooms continue to be "listening, reading textbooks, completing workbooks and worksheets, and taking quizzes" (Goodlad, 1984, p. 213). The purpose of teaching and learning history - to develop in students critical thinking and responsible citizenship skills[2] - gets lost as teachers make tracks through the required curriculum. Not surprisingly, students consistently rate history as their least favorite, least interesting, most boring, and most mindless subject (Goodlad, 1984; Schug, Todd & Berry, 1984). Engle (1990) submits:

> They [the students] find the...exposition of history...extremely resistant to learning, easily forgotten, and of no consequence in any case. (p. 431)

National History Day

In 1984, in a last ditch attempt to alleviate classroom

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[2]as expressed by the 1893 Committee of Ten (a subgroup of the NEA Commission), the American Historical Association Committee of 1896, the 1916 NEA Committee on Social Studies, the California State Department in 1988, the Bradley Commission in 1988, and the National Commission of Social Studies in 1989. See also Jenness (1990) in References.

boredom (mine and the students'), I introduced the National History Day (NHD) program to my history classes.[3] Two years later several of the students listed "National History Day" in their senior yearbooks as the "Most Memorable Event" of their high school years. That surprising response, added to the dramatic cognitive, affective, and motivational results I witnessed in the program, led me to investigative doctoral work and to a study of the dynamics of NHD.

Since its inception as Cleveland History Day in 1974, there had never been a comprehensive study of the History Day program. A literature review (Adams & Pasch, 1987; Briggs, 1986; Haas, Donnohue, & Jennings, 1985; Hoffman, 1987; Keller, 1987, 1990), however, showed that all of the published reports, testimonials, and descriptions of NHD and associated cognitive and affective results were positive and in sharp contrast to the dismal reports and descriptions of traditional, contemporary secondary education and to the dreary picture of the teaching and learning of history (see Shaver, 1991).

A student (Sally) and teacher (Ms. McCray) involved in a pilot study confirmed both the published reports on NHD and the analysts' descriptions of contemporary high school education.

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[3] NHD is a secondary school history related program in which students research and develop a presentation on a topic related to an annual theme. Students may participate in 1 of 4 categories: individual written paper, group or individual live performance, group or individual media presentation, or group or individual table-top presentation. The program lasts from 6 to 9 months depending on how successful students are at district, regional, and state competitions and culminates at the national competition at the University of Maryland in June.

Sally described her high school classes as "boring" but NHD as "fun" and as allowing students to "learn...the most about things" while "coming up with their own ideas." McCray denounced the traditional history curriculum and methodology as superficial and leading to students' lack of understanding. On the other hand, she claimed, students in NHD invested more, refined their work more, learned more, showed "growth in a lot of different areas" and had "an ownership" of their work.

This discrepancy between the accounts of NHD and those concerning contemporary and/or history education intrigued me and at the same time raised questions about the validity of the claims for, and descriptions of, NHD. Through a critical study I hoped to obtain a realistic portrait of NHD. My goal was to determine: whether the positive claims for NHD were realistic and founded; why and how the program grew from a local program with 129 students in 1974 to over 500,000 students nationally in 1991; and what implications there were for educational processes and concerns.

This paper focuses on specific components of that doctoral study. It includes: a description of the study; findings in relation to the history and development of NHD and to the learning and motivational effects of participation in NHD; implications for educational reform in general and for the teaching and learning of history specifically; and conclusions, dilemmas, and recommendations.

II. The Study

The Ethnohistorical Approach

To obtain as "rich, thick" (Merriam, 1988, p. 11), and complete a description of NHD as possible, I conducted an ethnohistorical case study using Puckett's (1986, 1989) ethnohistorical case study of Foxfire as a model. This approach, which combines traditional historiographic methods - library, documentary, and primary source research - with traditional ethnographic procedures such as participant observation and interviewing, allowed me to study, determine, and describe not only the historical foundations and the contemporary dynamics of NHD, but also the relationship between the two elements. Like Puckett (1989), however, I felt like a pioneer - aside from his study of Foxfire, there are few examples of educational ethnohistories; additionally the definition is still evolving.[4]

The historical component of the study involved: visiting NHD national headquarters (which at the time of the study were located at Case Western Reserve - CWR - University in Cleveland); interviewing Dr. Van Tassel, President of NHD, Inc., and Dr. Ubbelodhe (CWR professors instrumental in founding NHD) and the

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[4] Precourt (1982) conducted an "ethnohistorical" study of a Kentucky settlement school. Grant (1988), in his study of "Hamilton High," used historical perspectives of social and political events and of the community and school culture to understand, analyze, and describe the evolution of the school system, culture, policies, and goals. Grant calls this an historical case study. Smith et al (in Puckett, 1989) describe their study of Kensington elementary school system as an ethnographic case study with "an historical chronicle and interpretation of the process of change" (p.6).

Executive and Associate Directors at that time - Drs. Scharf and Gorn; and collecting what materials the office had on NHD and its history, processes, and organizational structure. These materials included financial reports, testimonial letters, annual reports, published articles, an introductory video-tape, theme fliers, contest guides, and classroom supplements.

The ethnographic portion of the study consisted of a series of 3 on-site, in-depth (Seidman, 1991) interviews[5] with 4 teachers and 13 students from 3 high schools. The first interviews occurred before NHD competitions had begun and the second interviews took place after district and/or regional competitions. Students participated in the third interviews during the national competition at the University of Maryland. (All of the students involved in this study, except for one who dropped out of the program in March, received first or second place at their state finals and consequently went to Maryland for the national competition.) The teachers participated informally in their third interviews at the national competition and by phone after the national competition. To check the internal validity of, and to fill gaps in, the data, I conducted semi-structured telephone interviews with 3 state coordinators and 6 former NHD students who represented the states and schools

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[5] Collectively the interviews were framed by three questions: 1) Describe your background up to the time you were involved in NHD; 2) What is it like to be involved in NHD?; and 3) What does it mean to you to be involved in NHD?

in this study.

The Sample

The schools. I used the techniques of purposeful sampling and maximum variation to select the 3 schools (Merriam, 1988; Seidman, 1991). According to Merriam, purposeful sampling is based "on the assumption that one wants to discover, understand, [and] gain insight; therefore one needs to select a sample from which one can learn the most" (p. 48). Additionally, my goal was to choose schools/programs which would give me the "maximum variation" (Seidman, p. 42) in sites since this approach allows the "widest possibility for readers of the study to connect to what they are reading" (Seidman, p. 42-43). Based on these propositions, I selected the following schools:

1. in a racially, ethnically, and economically mixed industrial urban area of the Southwest: School A, a high school which at the time of the study had a highly diverse student population of almost 3000, was involved in a strong state program, and had had more national NHD winners than any other school in the United States (students in honors and gifted and talented programs were required to develop History Day presentations for their classes, but were not required to compete formally in NHD);

2. in an affluent rural-suburban area of the Northeast: School B, a highly academic high school which had a mainly Anglo-American population of approximately 600 students and was involved in a weak state program (students participated voluntarily);

3. in a blue-collar industrial community of a Mid-Atlantic state: School C, a high school which had a moderately diverse student population of about 700 of which approximately 35%-40% went on to further education. It was involved in a strong state program (students participated voluntarily).

The teachers. The School A teacher selected for this study

was the school's NHD coordinator; she had participated in NHD since 1980. This choice was grounded in the tenet that:

> in this type of research the crucial factor is not the number of respondents but rather the potential of each person to contribute to the development of insight and understanding of the phenomenon. (Merriam, 1988, p. 77)

In School B, the teacher who took part in this study was that school's only teacher involved in NHD. She had participated in NHD for a total of 6 years. In School C, the only NHD participants - and consequently chosen as study participants - were a teacher and librarian (to whom I refer as teacher for simplicity in writing) who worked as a team. One had been involved in NHD for 6 years, the other for 4 years. All of the teachers were female.

The students. At each school, the teacher(s) helped to identify students for the study - one student representing an NHD individual entry and one group of students representing an NHD group entry. The main criteria for selection were ability to articulate, ability to contribute to the understanding of the program dynamics, and interest in being part of the study. I established these criteria after problems with interviewing Sally in the pilot study and also after reading about Puckett's (1986) experiences in his study of *Foxfire*:

> Given that most of the students were not interested in the research, the emergent data were colorless and of marginal interest....The time and energy to collect this information was poorly spent. (p. 46)

I also tried to balance the NHD categories represented by the students. The final selection (7 males, 7 females) included

3 individual entrants - 1 performance, 1 media, and 1 table-top contestant - and 3 group media entrants. At the time of the study, 7 students were seniors, 6 were juniors and 1 was a freshman. Four were in designated honors or gifted and talented curricula; the teachers considered the others average or above average. Five students were Asian-American, 1 was Indian-American, and the 7 others were Anglo-American.

The state coordinators and former students. The state coordinators in this study, 2 males and 1 female (with 10, 6, and 9 years experience in NHD) represented the states of the selected schools. With several years of NHD experience, each was able to provide a description and historical perspective of her/his state program - in which the participating schools, teachers, and students were involved - as well as historical perspectives on the national program's processes. Selection of former students was mainly a reflection of availability. Each teacher in the study provided names and telephone numbers of former NHD participants. Of the former students (4 males, 2 females) in this study, 4 were college students, 1 was a college graduate and 1 was a high school student.

Analysis

Analysis involved interpreting, summarizing, and synthesizing the documentary data and integrating such with data from the transcribed interviews of the founding professors and the Executive and Associate Directors. This historical synthesis became a context for the ethnographic study. From the

transcribed student and teacher interviews, I extracted and categorized themes, issues, concerns, and experiences (Merriam, 1988). With the interviews of the state coordinators and the former students, I likewise looked for themes and patterns and then used these to confirm, supplement, or question the findings from the student and teacher data. The final process was to integrate the historiographic and ethnographic data.

Reliability. To strengthen and allow determination of reliability of this study, in terms of results making sense (Lincoln & Guba, 1985), I documented each step of the study; I described the methods and conditions of data collection, the types of documents included in the study, the participants and how I chose them, the settings, and the method of data analysis; and I included verbatim accounts as raw data (LeCompte & Goetz, 1982; Merriam, 1988; Puckett, 1986).

Validity. The technique of triangulation (Patton, 1980) - using multiple sources and methods - provided cross validation of findings. In addition, because the main participants - the teachers and students - were involved in three interviews, it was possible to determine the internal consistency and validity of their responses (Seidman, 1991). Also it was possible to judge truthfulness in the interviews through "syntax, pauses,...[and] self-effacing laughter" (Seidman, p. 19). Other checks of validity in this study included: gathering the data over time - interviewing and observing occurred from September 1990 to September 1991; having dissertation committee members and peers

review analyses; and having the participants review interpretations (Merriam, 1988).

Limitations

Researcher bias. Prior to this research, several of my high school students had participated in the NHD program - from 1984-1987 - and some had won at the district and state level. In addition, I had been a judge for the program at the district, state, and national levels. While I entered the doctoral program to investigate the positive academic and affective effects I had witnessed, my effort truly was to remain neutral and to obtain a realistic picture of the dynamics of NHD. In some ways, my experience in the program allowed me to obtain data to which I otherwise would not have had access. By triangulating my data sources and methods and viewing NHD from an ethnohistorical perspective, I reduced the effects of my own experiences. Observations and interview data quickly exposed the strengths and weaknesses of the program.

Selection bias. This was not a random procedure. Missing from the sample is a non-winning school - one which had participated in NHD and had never progressed to the national level of competition; missing is a rural school. Moreover, most of the students involved in the study were considered above average students; some were from gifted and talented and honors classes. I did include students who were, and those who were not, required to participate in NHD and students who were, and others who were not, in the NHD teachers' classes; however, I

would like to have included more students of average and lower ability as well as special needs students. Furthermore, teachers referred the former students to me and that choice probably reflected teacher bias.

Researcher effects. Because an outside researcher can influence the lives and responses of the participants (Merriam, 1988), it is possible that my presence affected some of the processes of the study. "The fact is that interviewers are a part of the interviewing picture" (Seidman, 1991, p. 16). The most powerful checks on researcher effects in this study are the triangulation techniques described above and the study's duration which probably reduced the novelty factor.

III. The Findings

The History of History Day

Van Tassel and Ubbelodhe (the founding professors) were not thinking about secondary school reform or about the goals for education in the information age or about the needs of students in the 21st century when they founded History Day in the early 1970s. They had their own set of problems which centered around declining history and university enrollments, the deteriorating status of history in general, lost connections with secondary school teachers (after the CWR Education Department closed), and the need to plan for the Bicentennial celebration. Their solution - after much deliberation and after Van Tassel had discovered statistics that showed "80% of students who showed up on a campus applied to that university" - was to develop a

university connected history contest based loosely on the successful Science Fair model. Van Tassel explained:

> I thought if we could bring high school and junior high school students onto campus in connection with some kind of history project, we would have a built in connection with high school and junior high school teachers and we might re-interest or interest students in history and it might be useful to teachers as well.

The original History Day and program expansion. The form which the original History Day took was that of a competition, culminating on one day at CWR, which actively involved secondary students in researching and developing a presentation on a topic related to an annual theme. The program allowed for creativity of expression by providing a choice of presentation categories - individual written papers, group or individual live performance, and group or individual table-top projects. (The media category was added later.) The program expanded state-wide in the mid-1970s, then regionally during the late 1970s; by 1980 the History Day program had become a national contest.

National growth. The growth in the program from its first national contest in 1980 to 1991 was phenomenal. The first NHD competition was held in Washington, DC in 1980 - 19 states participated. In 1984, 44 states were involved, and by 1991, 48 states participated. While these numbers explain how successful the national expansion was, they do not tell the whole story - they do not reveal the explosion in the number of students involved - from 19,000 in 1980, to 150,000 in 1984, to over 500,000 in 1991. Data from the interviews of Van Tassel, Ubbelodhe, Scharf, and Gorn and from the NHD documentary

materials indicate that Scharf - the Executive Director from the beginning of the national expansion to the time of this study - and Gorn were largely responsible for the national expansion of History Day in terms of the states' involvement. This same data, however, provide no clear explanation for the ever increasing participation of students and teachers in a secondary program which was started to solve problems in a university in Cleveland.

The founders and administrators were aware of the extraordinary growth in student and teacher participation in NHD, but seemed not to understand why it had happened and were very humble about their role in this growth. Ubbelodhe's reflections and questions about this growth mimicked those of the others:

> I'm amazed at the faithfulness with which the teachers pursue...the activities and the enterprise...the rewards surely must be very minimal for the investment....I look at the numbers involved which are really quite staggering....You have to ask yourself, well if there weren't History Day what would there be?...Are we thinking about a vacuum with none of this at all happening?...I can't help but think that History Day is a good thing.

Scharf could not explain this growth either:

> It is definitely a program for the active, not the passive; the creative, not the traditional teacher. It's demanding, but those who use it in one form or another are awfully excited about it, so it must do something for them.

What <u>does</u> NHD do for participants?

<u>Learning Results</u>

<u>Learning in history.</u> According to all study participants, through the active learning (their descriptor)/investigative processes in NHD, the students in this study not only developed

critical thinking skills (one of the goals of NHD, the history/education committees of the late 1800s and early 1900s, the history frameworks/policy statements of the late 1980s, and most secondary school history courses - see footnote #2) and an expertise in conducting original research, but also the ability to develop their own knowledge. Participants claimed the students became confident, creative, independent, and reflective thinkers who looked at issues from several perspectives before drawing, and acting upon, conclusions. Additionally they claimed participation allowed for a deeper, more comprehensive learning of historical topics, concepts, and context than the students had or could have achieved in a traditional history class.

Multidimensional learning. Furthermore, the data show that participation in NHD provided these students with a total educational and growing experience rarely seen in a secondary school setting. Compositely, study participants argued that - in addition to the learning described above - the students learned writing, condensing, synthesizing, communication, interviewing, research, technical (media), and group work skills while gaining in self-esteem and self-confidence. (Space restrictions prevent addressing all of these elements.)

Without prompting, 9 of the 13 participating students - at different points in the interviews - launched into discussions about learning effects that were different from and more substantial than those in traditional classroom settings. Representative of the responses, Linda (School A) claimed it was

through condensing and synthesizing the research for her NHD projects, not through work in her English classes, that she had learned to write. Likewise Jim (School A) argued that he had learned a lot more about doing research, interviewing, and public speaking through NHD than "any English class could ever teach." Amosh (School A) found that NHD provided a way to apply skills he learned in other classes:

> You can apply your English skills to this....There's ...math involved...in the media....[and] through band you...learn...what kind of mood music you need, where you need it, how to tone it down, and where to bring it in.

Media production. While all the study participants claimed that these students learned by actively researching and developing their own projects and presentations, there was a novel emphasis on active learning in relation to student production of media presentations. To paraphrase Watson (School C), if a teacher tells students they are going to see a movie, she/he might as well say, "Goodnight, everybody." However when these students in NHD worked with media, it was an active, creative development, not the typical passive absorption - or in most cases non absorption - associated with traditional classroom media use. What is more revealing is that students at School A claimed that when a student watched another student's media presentation, she/he was much more actively involved and attentive than when watching professionally developed media.

Jim thought this was so because students wanted to evaluate their own presentation in relation to other students'

presentations. Ed and Amosh, however, argued that it had more to do with knowing how difficult developing a media presentation was and in having empathy for the student producer. Amosh also argued that adolescents were more trusting of other adolescents and would put more stock in a student's presentation than in a professionally developed one because "they're [the professionals] paid to do that and you kind of get this negative thing in your mind."

Teamwork. Steve and John (School B) and Adam (School C) commented on the teamwork they had learned through NHD; they submitted that that teamwork wouldn't have occurred and didn't occur in regular classes. Steve (School B) confirmed that the NHD teamwork was different from group work in traditional classes:

> We learned what teamwork can do [through NHD]....In school, [the work is] more on an individual basis....There are some classes where you do work together, but this is like we really did work together...we had to understand each other, compromise...it just gave us the sense of what a real team was all about.

Within the context of group work, collectively the students emphasized they had learned responsibility, cooperation, sensitivity, and patience.

Learning for former students. The former NHD students who had completed high school confirmed and expanded upon these assertions. They argued that participation in NHD prepared them for college as nothing else had and that it gave them the feeling that they could do anything they set out to do. Jared's

commentary on the value of NHD participation was the most compelling:

> I learned the most from my extra-curricula activities with [NHD] than from any sit-down course I will ever take. I learned how to stand in front of judges and explain to them our research, our quest, our commitment to the project. I learned my first interviewing skills in the ninth grade. I wonder how many high school students do interviews before they graduate....I also learned research skills. I discovered so many ways of finding resources. In the ninth grade we had called people across the Atlantic for an interview, we had read hundreds of articles, books, letters. We visited the archives and the library [at the university]. Photographs, letters, pamphlets, transcripts, business documents, talking to congressmen, state senators, city officials - it all allowed us to connect personally with the person or subject we were researching. No other program in secondary schools is comparable.

Primary Motivating Factors

As important as these learning results were for the teachers and students, they were not the primary motivators for participation in NHD. Why did these teachers and students expend extraordinary amounts of extra-school work and time in the NHD program and why did they do it (in great contrast to conventional educational practice and posture) with little complaining but rather with an attitude of excitement and anticipation? Why did the teachers give up personal time to work without pay with the students in NHD? Why did these students give up innumerable hours they could have spent with friends or in other activities to participate in NHD? Indeed, why, if 11 of these students were more interested in science than history and if most of them did not like or were indifferent to history as a school subject, were all but two of them participating for at least the second time?

The students. The data show that, for the students, participation in NHD provided an opportunity to fulfill needs that were not being, or could not be, met in a traditional classroom. The students were able to have fun and develop camaraderie with peers both at their schools and at the competition events; Adam (School C) literally sprung from his seat as he explained how important peer interaction was to him:

> It's so much fun being with all the kids....We go to...state [competition], up in the [college] dorms we mess around. We just have fun...it's just the whole camaraderie....My main goal was to get to states [competition]...it is so much fun.

Additionally the students received positive recognition for, and feedback about, the quality and usefulness of their work; and they were able to compare themselves to peers and thus more able to develop self-identity and re-formulate goals (primary needs of developing adolescents).

Further, according to the interviews, what motivated these students was empowerment. While the traditional teacher-dominated classroom "cultivates passivity, conformity, obedience, acquiescence, and unquestioning acceptance of authority" (Kreisberg, 1992, p. 9) and stifles students' creativity, study participants submitted that involvement in NHD encouraged and allowed the students to have autonomy in their work, to make choices, (and as suggested above) to be creative, to think independently, to attain mastery of a topic and presentation form, to be useful to their school and community, to have a purpose beyond receiving a grade, and therefore to feel competent and to gain confidence and self-esteem. That is empowering.

The teachers. Again, while learning results were extremely important to these teachers, it appears from the interviews that the primary motivators were opportunities through NHD to fulfill needs which could not be met - and to accomplish what they perceived could not be accomplished - in a traditional classroom. The teachers argued that through NHD they were able to develop a closeness with students, to receive recognition for their efforts, to contribute to their communities, to allow and foster creativity in their students, and to have fun and avoid boredom. White (School B) was as animated as Adam (School C) - and reflected the other teachers' feelings - when she declared:

> Frankly I'm bored out of my gourd with it [traditional classroom history]....History Day is where I have my fun.

Participation in NHD empowered these teachers as it did with the students. Even though teachers are seen generally as figures of authority and as controlling the classroom and the students, they are "remarkably isolated and often strikingly powerless" (Kreisberg, 1992, p. 9). The teachers in this study, however, submitted that through NHD they had control of their work, they received feedback about their competence, they felt useful and productive, they enjoyed themselves, and they were able to use their expertise not only in, but to maintain, a collaborative teacher/student relationship rather than having to be part of a dominate/be dominated system.

IV. Implications

Educational Reform

In their attempt to answer specific concerns at CWR in

Cleveland in the early 1970s, did the founders of NHD unwittingly discover or create the solution to the national educational dilemmas of low teacher morale, low student motivation, and obsolete educational programs? While the positive learning results were important to the participants, these students and teachers were involved mainly because participation empowered them and fulfilled their needs; working through and with a standardized, controlled, test and textbook driven curriculum did and had not. The implications of these findings for educational practice and reform revolve around how to incorporate these motivational and empowering dynamics of the NHD processes into the secondary school curriculum and culture - or, better yet, how to change the curriculum and culture so that they are as motivating and empowering as participation in NHD is.

The Teaching and Learning of History

For the teaching and learning of history specifically, the implications are equally clear. Less is more. White (School B) equated covering the curriculum to putting a lid on a pot. As she would argue, teachers need to allow students to actively "uncover" the curriculum or **TAKE THE LID OFF THE POT** - to create and develop their own knowledge - in and out of the classroom in the same way that she and these other teachers had done for several years with their students through NHD. For this to occur, there would need to be a redesign and reframing of the history curriculum. Teachers and schools would have to reconsider, or in fact consider, curriculum development in

relation to teaching methods and goals.

Most teachers do not make a purposeful effort to make history boring; they make a concerted, usually unsuccessful, attempt to cover the curriculum (Brodkey, 1991; Shulman, 1987). While this is more apparent for new teachers, even the experienced teachers in this study had a conflict and problem with balancing coverage of required curriculum with what they considered the more important goal of developing research, analyzing, and critical thinking skills through NHD.

Covering the curriculum is not only an impossible task, but, I submit, has little if anything to do with meeting the goals of the teaching and learning of history. The student who passively receives information, as he/she often does in history courses which focus on covering the curriculum, has no notion of what it means to be a responsible citizen in a democratic society. If democracy is to survive, students need to learn how, and to become confident and able to develop their own knowledge and perspectives; to make their own conclusions and decisions; and to communicate effectively. Study participants claimed these students reached these goals through participating in the active learning methods inherent in the NHD program.

V. Conclusions

While results of a qualitative study such as this cannot be generalized to an entire population, the differences among the schools, communities, locations, teachers, and students combined with the similarities in the findings and with the corroborating

data from state coordinators and former students suggest:

1. that the processes of NHD provide a method of teaching and learning history that is superior to traditional teaching methods;

2. that participation in NHD provides a total educational - cognitive, affective, and skill-related - experience unmatched in traditional secondary educational programs;

3. that the processes of NHD meet and surpass the goals of the teaching and learning of history as well as the requirements of secondary school reformers;

4. that there are motivational components in NHD - having needs fulfilled and being empowered - not found in traditional educational settings;

5. and that it is probable that these motivating dynamics of NHD account for the enormous growth in student and teacher participation over the last 10 years.

VI. Dilemmas

In view of these conlusions, there are two dilemmas:

1. Would it be more equitable and democratic for a school to incorporate NHD or similar processes into a required curriculum so that all (supposedly) could experience the same learning, empowering effects as have the study's participants (if in fact requiring something would allow the effects to be the same) or to keep NHD as a voluntary program in which only those who want to or are at a certain ability level participate and therefore only those become empowered?

2. If the processes of NHD, without the competition, are incorporated into a school program, would the positive effects be the same as found in this study? If not, what would this say about the necessity of competition in relation to motivation and learning results? What would the implications be for the teaching and learning of history in terms of developing in students responsible citizenship skills through competition?

VII. Recommendations

1. One of the limitations of this study is that it does not include more students of average or below average ability. Further research is suggested to compare effectiveness of NHD processes with students of differing achievement and ability levels.

2. Further research involving NHD programs which are the sole history curriculum or are a required component of the history curriculum is required to balance and corroborate these findings and to shed light on how these programs have been implemented and with what results.

3. Further research on the profile of NHD teachers could be valuable in terms of developing selection criteria for teacher candidates.

4. Research focused on the effects of student media production is needed to determine implications for the use of technology in schools in terms of developing visual literacy and cognitive skills.

5. Several questions, not all raised in this paper, were not answered sufficiently in the study. Further study is recommended to determine:

a. secondary history teachers' perceptions, understanding, and philosophies of the structure of the discipline of history;
b. the role teacher education programs play in secondary teachers' understanding of the discipline;
c. reasons for secondary teachers not seeing purpose beyond, or being unable to do anything besides, "covering the material."

This paper addresses only some of the results of the study. For further information contact Marilyn Page at Johnson State College, Johnson, Vt 05656.

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